

health, and safeguard habitat and watersheds.

Radio Remarks to the People of Cuba on Cuban Independence Day

May 20, 2003

Today, Cubans around the world celebrate May 20th, Cuban Independence Day. On behalf of the people of the United States, I send greetings to the Cuban community. My hope is for the Cuban people to soon enjoy the same freedoms and rights that we do. Dictatorships have no place in the Americas. May God bless the Cuban people who are struggling for freedom. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded in Spanish at 9:50 a.m. on May 16 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for later broadcast on Radio Marti. The Spanish language transcript and an English translation were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20. This text follows the English translation.

Commencement Address at the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut

May 21, 2003

Thank you very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Admiral Collins and Admiral Olsen, Secretary Ridge, Lieutenant Governor Rell, Mr. President—I'm glad you're here; thank you for coming, sir—Congressman Simmons, the fine professors of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, distinguished guests, proud family members, and the graduates, thank you for your welcome, and thank you for the honor of speaking to the newest officers of the United States Coast Guard.

You know, I was born in this State, just down the road. *[Laughter]* I've still got relatives living here. *[Laughter]* And it looks like some of them were up late last night painting Pride Rock. *[Laughter]*

This is a proud day for the Class of 2003. I know you've worked hard to get here. You've persevered through the rigors of Swab Summer. You've faced difficult trials in the classroom, aboard *Eagle*. And now, with silver dollars in your pockets, you're

ready to become officers in our Nation's oldest continuous seagoing service. You have shown each day that you "revere honor" and that you "honor duty." You have made your families, your professors, and your country proud. On behalf of the American people, thank you for choosing a life of service, and congratulations on a great achievement.

I bring with me a small graduation present. Pursuant to the longstanding tradition, I hereby grant amnesty to all cadets on restriction for minor conduct offenses. *[Laughter]* I leave it up to Admiral Olsen to determine the definition of "minor." *[Laughter]*

Coast Guard Academy life is demanding, and it should be because you are entrusted with solemn responsibilities in peace and in war. America counts on the Coast Guard to enforce maritime law, to secure our waterways and ports, to rescue those in distress, and to intercept illegal drugs. In this new century, we will count on you even more. The men and women of this class are the first ever to graduate into the Department of Homeland Security, which is charged with protecting the American people against terrorist attacks. You are bringing a long tradition of duty to this new and urgent tasks. Terrorists who seek to harm our country now face your "Shield of Freedom." Every citizen can be grateful that the Coast Guard stands watch for America.

The Coast Guard is also playing a vital role in America's strategy to confront terror before it comes to our shores. In the Iraqi theater, Coast Guard cutters and patrol boats and buoy tenders and over a thousand of your finest active duty and reserve members protected key ports and oil platforms, detained Iraqi prisoners of war, and helped speed the delivery of relief supplies to the Iraqi people. Many have returned safely to port, and many remain on duty in the Persian Gulf. All have helped to liberate a great people, and all have brought a great credit to the uniform of the United States Coast Guard.

In Iraq, America's military and our allies carried out every mission and exceeded every expectation. Heavy units of armor and infantry moved with speed and agility that kept the enemy in a state of constant surprise and